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STATEMENT BY TOM CASEY, DEPUTY SPOKESMAN

Opening of Somalia National Reconciliation Congress

The United States welcomes the opening of the Somalia National Reconciliation Congress in Mogadishu on Sunday, July 15, and looks forward to continued deliberations over the coming weeks. We are encouraged by the remarks from President Abdullahi Yusuf stating that the Congress will address key political issues, such as power sharing and transitional tasks mandated by the Transitional Federal Charter, and that the Transitional Federal Government will implement the outcomes of the Congress. We urge all Somali stakeholders to participate constructively in the Congress and use this opportunity to establish a roadmap for the remainder of the transitional process leading to elections in 2009.

The United States calls on the National Governance and Reconciliation Committee and the Transitional Federal Government to create an environment in which all relevant stakeholders can participate in the Congress and contribute to a lasting political solution in Somalia.

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